

Community Plan and  
Local Coastal Program  
Ad Hoc Committee  
of the Venice Neighborhood Council

**OCEAN FRONT WALK &  
ABBOT KINNEY BLVD  
Subarea Review**

Prepared by Frank Murphy, Naomi Nightingale & Robin Rudisill  
**June 26, 2024**

# Ocean Front Walk

## Preference Survey Results for Ocean Front Walk

- Strong preference for buildings using only the buildable area
- Strong preference for no change on Ocean Front Walk.
- Strong preference for a maximum of 3 stories on Rose Avenue.
- Very strong preference for a maximum of 3 stories on Abbot Kinney Blvd.

The Ocean Front Walk subarea extends 1-1/2 miles from the Santa Monica city boundary on the north to just shy of Washington Boulevard, and just the one block west of Speedway. North of Venice Boulevard most of its length is classified as Commercial except that a block north and south of Paloma Avenue and three blocks near Venice Boulevard are classified as MFR-Medium. The corresponding zoning is C1 and R3. In actuality, there are numerous living units scattered within and among the commercial properties. South of Venice Boulevard, properties are classified as SFR-Medium Low (RD1.5).

The Survey was oriented to more residential subareas of Venice than is Ocean Front Walk, so that its questions often do not really pertain. Several Business/Employees responded (17%) with renters (45%) the single largest group of responders. They show a strong preference for structures to fill only the buildable area (54%), although most extend to Speedway.

Half of the responders want no change to Ocean Front Walk rather than a mix of old and new or even taller, mixed-use structures. Fifteen-story buildings on Washington, Venice, or Lincoln Boulevards are not wanted, but no lower height limit is clear favorite. Responders show a strong preference (57%) for no more than 3-story buildings on Rose Avenue and a very strong preference (71%) for a 3-story limit on Abbot Kinney Boulevard.

## **Public Comments Summary for Ocean Front Walk – no national chains on Boardwalk**

- We don't want national chain stores on the boardwalk. That changes the character right there. I would like to incorporate policies or regulations in the Community Plan update that would limit, prohibit or manage national chain stores on Ocean Front Walk. Cities all over the country, including San Francisco, have enacted laws and ordinances to protect the uniqueness of certain areas, protect independent stores from not being able to compete economically with large corporations, and protect creative communities from becoming homogenized and losing their appeal.
- The national chains also drive up commercial rents and make it unaffordable for new businesses, displace neighborhood serving businesses that have been viable for decades, and erode the individual feel of the area. The former councilman, Mike Bonin, put forth a motion in November 2018 that was approved by the City's Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee in April 2019.
- PLUM requested City Planning to study the impacts of independent retail uses on the social fabric of a community and report on the levels of economic, social, and cultural activity such uses support, including the number of jobs per square foot and the diversity of residents.
- PLUM also instructed City Planning, in consultation with the City Attorney, to report on the feasibility of using zoning and other land use planning tools to encourage the siting of independent retail uses on Ocean Front Walk in the Venice community. The Venice Community Plan update is the perfect time to accomplish a restriction on these kinds of companies that, left unfettered, would eventually take over and homogenize our famous walkway that is best known for being unique, creative and different.

## **Public Comments Summary for Ocean Front Walk**

- The new plans indicate that Ocean Front Walk is a Regional Center land use designation, which is defined as a hub of regional commerce, usually along major transportation corridors, mid-rise to high rise, active shop fronts and active streets, provides a significant number of jobs in addition to residential, retail, government, entertainment, cultural facilities, and health facilities. That sounds more like Century City than Ocean Front Walk, so I'm not sure going in that Ocean Front Walk should be designated a Regional Center.
- Along Ocean Front Walk, I'm not sure it's going to be acceptable to increase density/living units and bring in a lot of new building to the extent that City Planning is proposing, because of sea level rise and increased flooding. It's not clear City Planning has considered that, but the Coastal Commission will consider it when they review for the LCP, and so the community plan will need to match that. So, it remains to be seen if increased density is going to continue in the plan at that level.

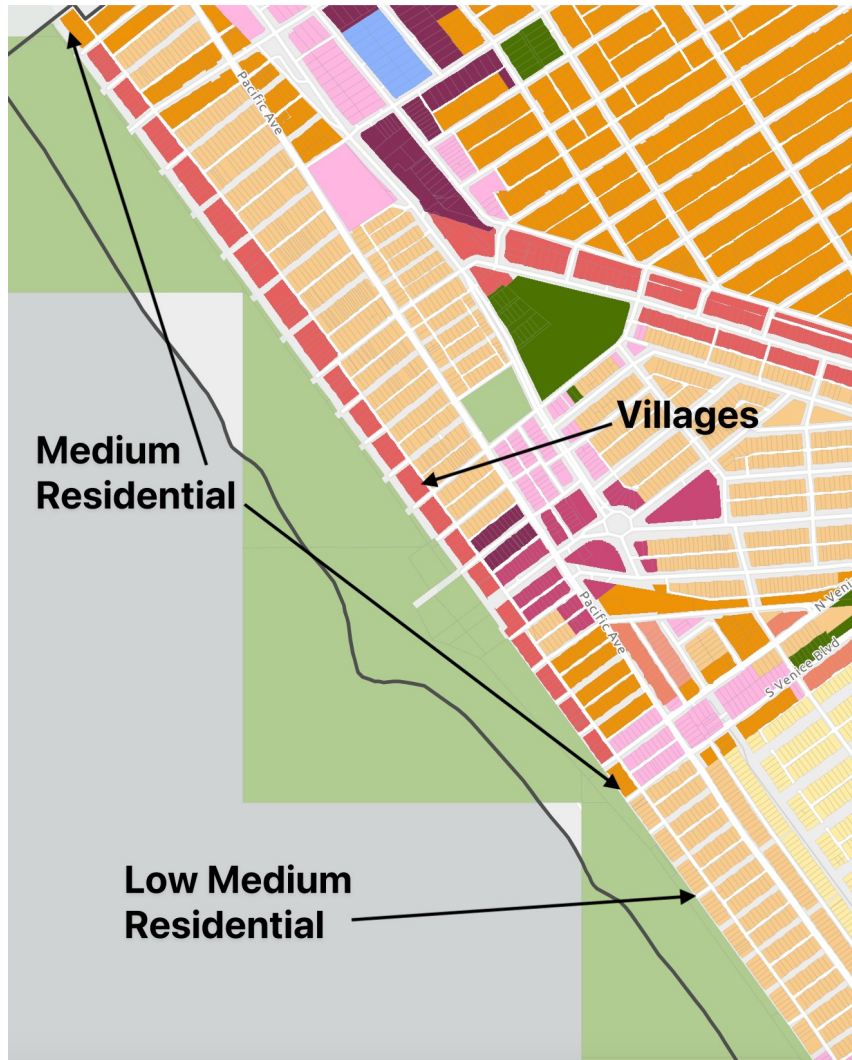
## Public Comments Summary for Ocean Front Walk

- The Density Bonus law and the Coastal Act law, both state laws, must be “harmonized.” The Density Bonus law states: “This section does not supersede or in any way alter or lessen the effect or application of the California Coastal Act of 1976...Any density bonus, concessions, incentives, waivers or reductions of development standards, and parking ratios to which the applicant is entitled under this section, shall be permitted in a manner that is consistent with this section and [The Coastal Act.]” A Coastal Development Permit is required, and a discretionary review performed. Coastal hazards are also considered – sea level rise, flood zones, etc. It’s not a “slam dunk” that a project would get five stories (for example) because it included an affordable unit. There are other factors considered in the Coastal Zone.
- When you look at all the photographs at the Venice Heritage Museum, so little has changed except for the clothing that people were wearing at the time. And according to Jeffrey Solomon, who ran Venice Beach Walking Tours, that's what makes Venice "The People's Beach." The people of L.A. all come to Venice, every shape and size and age and political ideology and religion and everything else. And we run a terrible risk of losing that charm that brings the 10 million people a year to Venice. So, I encourage everybody to get behind these efforts to say what we want and what we need and what we deserve. So many of us have lived here for so long and want to keep the wonderful character and its characters.

## **Protection of RSO Units and Other Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing – Ocean Front Walk**

- While it is important to increase housing unit density in Los Angeles, it cannot be at the expense of naturally occurring affordable homes currently occupied by long-term community members who, if displaced for new development, are unable to relocate within their community or afford to return when the development is complete. RSO units play a crucial role in providing stability, cohesion and socioeconomic diversity for our communities as they safeguard tenants from displacement, exorbitant rent hikes and unjust evictions.
- The possibility of eliminating RSO units and other naturally occurring affordable housing due to Planning’s proposed increases in density significantly impacts the housing stability of vulnerable communities such as Venice. It also increases the potential for homelessness, especially as the relocation fees do not adequately cover ever increasing market rate rents, nor do they equitably accommodate larger households. We must not compromise the lives of our lower-income community members, many lifelong.
- The Coastal Act states in section 30116 that areas that provide existing coastal housing for low- and moderate-income persons are “Sensitive Coastal Resource areas.” The Coastal Act requires that sensitive coastal resources be protected. Those areas must be identified so that protection can be put into place. The certified Land Use Plan Policy I. E. 1. states that Venice’s unique social diversity should be protected as a Special Coastal Community pursuant to Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.
- A “community plan” must not displace community members currently living in older housing stock that is RSO or otherwise affordable or lower cost housing. USC professor Manuel Pastor, co-author of the report Rent Matters, states "Housing stability matters because it is associated with physical, social, and psychological well-being; higher educational achievement by the young; and benefits for people of color." RSO and other naturally occurring affordable housing play a crucial role in providing stability, cohesion, and socioeconomic diversity for our communities.
- The priority of the Venice Community Plan and LCP update must be the preservation and protection of existing RSO/rent-stabilized units, other naturally occurring affordable housing, and our existing unique, diverse community, which must take precedence, be the priority over, and supersede any zoning changes.

# Ocean Front Walk – City Planning Proposed Land Use Designations



## Villages

Villages are characterized by walkable and fine-grained block patterns that serve as historic and cultural regional niche market destinations. The building form is Very Low Rise, Low Rise, or Mid Rise, and typically includes a height limit for uniform building mass. Commercial uses, such as restaurants, retail, services, and small offices may be interspersed with a range of housing types; commercial uses on the ground floor help promote a pedestrian atmosphere. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings and infill development is responsive to the historic and cultural legacy of these areas. The residential density generally ranges from 1 unit per 1,200 square feet of lot area to 1 unit per 200 square feet of lot area; the residential density of Villages that are close to transportation hubs and/or Regional Centers may be limited by floor area.



## Medium Residential

Medium Residential areas provide a concentration of multi-unit housing and are typically located near commercial or employment centers. Supportive institutional uses may also be provided in certain Residential Use Districts. The building form ranges from Very Low Rise to Low Rise. The residential density generally ranges from 1 unit per 1,000 square feet of lot area to 1 unit per 400 square feet of lot area.



## Low Medium Residential

Low Medium Residential areas provide multi-unit housing, ranging from duplexes to small scale apartments, generally near neighborhood-serving uses. The building form ranges from House Scale to Very Low Rise. The residential density generally ranges from 1 unit per 3,000 square feet of lot area to 1 unit per 1,000 square feet of lot area.



Ocean Front Walk			
RESIDENTIAL-- City Planning Proposed Land Use Designations	Low Medium Residential (between S Venice & 30th Ave walk street)	Medium Residential (between N & S Venice)	Medium Residential (near Navy St.)
StoryMap Color			
Existing Zoning/Land Use Designation	RD1.5-1-O Multi-family Low Medium II	R3-1-O Medium Residential	R3-1 Medium Residential
Density - DU/Lot (excluding ADUs)	1 DU/1,500 SF of lot 2 DU (1 DU/1,500-2,000 SF if lot > 4,000 SF 1 DU/1,500 SF of lot	1 DU/800 SF of lot 2 DU (1 DU/1,200 SF if lot > 4,000 SF 1 DU/800 SF of lot	1 DU/800 SF of lot 2 DU (1 DU/1,200 SF if lot > 4,000 SF 1 DU/800 SF of lot
Maximum Height	3 Stories (no bonus) 30' flat roof/ 35' varied/stepped back 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back (no bonus*)	3 Stories (5 Stories) 30' flat roof/ 35' varied/stepped back 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back (no bonus*)	3 Stories (no bonus) 30' flat roof/ 35' varied/stepped back 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back (no bonus*)
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	1.0 (1.5) none 1.25 (no bonus*)	1.0 (3.0) none 1.25 (no bonus*)	1.0 (1.5) none 1.25 (no bonus*)
Lot Coverage	65%	65%	65%
Lot Consolidation	2 2	2 2	2 2

\* Rather than using the “by right” bonuses in the future Zoning Code (for which City Planning cannot explain the methodology), in the Coastal Zone the Density Bonus law would be used, which applies to projects with 5 or more total units and permits development “bonuses” in return for providing a specified percentage of total units as affordable housing, in a manner that is consistent with both the Density Bonus law and the Coastal Act.

Ocean Front Walk		
COMMERCIAL–City Planning Proposed Land Use Designations	Villages	Villages (1 block N & S of Windward)
StoryMap Color		
Existing Zoning/Land Use Designation	R3**, [Q]R3-1**, R3-1-O** Multi-Family Residential Medium** C1-1, [Q]C1-1, [Q]C1-1-O-CA, C1-1-CA, C2-1-CA Community Commercial	C2-1-CA Artacraft
Density - SF/LU	800 SF/LU 1 DU per 800-1,200 SF of lot area 800-1,200 SF/LU	800 SF/LU 1 DU per 800-1,200 SF of lot area 800-1,200 SF/LU
Maximum Height	3 Stories (5 Stories) 30' flat roof/35' varied/stepped back 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back (no bonus*)	3 Stories (6 Stories) 30' flat roof/ 35' varied/stepped back 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back (no bonus*)
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	1.5 (3) 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial (no bonus*)	1.5 (3) 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial (no bonus*)
Lot Coverage	90%	90%
Lot Consolidation	2 (>2 if conform to MSC) 2 (>2 if conform to MSC)	2 (>2 if conform to MSC) 2 (>2 if conform to MSC)

\* Rather than using the “by right” bonuses in the future Zoning Code (for which City Planning cannot explain the methodology), in the Coastal Zone the Density Bonus law would be used, which applies to projects with 5 or more total units and permits development “bonuses” in return for providing a specified percentage of total units as affordable housing, in a manner that is consistent with both the Density Bonus law and the Coastal Act.

\*\* Certain existing residential land use designations/zoning were changed to commercial with the March 2024 update, with no explanation.

March 2024 Planning Proposal    **Currently Allowed**    **Recommended (with Bonus)**

**The Venice Neighborhood Council recommends the following changes for the Ocean Front Walk subarea to Planning's current proposal for the Venice Community Plan:**

**Low Medium Residential (between S. Venice & 30<sup>th</sup> Ave walk street)**

- **Maximum Height: 30' flat roof, 35' varied/stepped back roofline (no bonus)**
- **FAR: 1.25 (no bonus)**
- **Lot Coverage: 65%**
- **Lot Consolidation: 2**

**Medium Residential (between N & S Venice)**

- **Maximum Height: 30' flat roof, 35' varied/stepped back roofline (no bonus)**
- **FAR: 1.25 (no bonus)**
- **Lot Coverage: 65%**
- **Lot Consolidation: 2**

**Medium Residential (near Navy St.)**

- **Maximum Height: 30' flat roof, 35' varied/stepped back roofline (no bonus)**
- **FAR: 1.25 (no bonus)**
- **Lot Coverage: 65%**
- **Lot Consolidation: 2**

**The Venice Neighborhood Council recommends the following changes for the Ocean Front Walk subarea to Planning's current proposal for the Venice Community Plan, continued:**

**Villages**

- Density: 800-1,200 SF/LU
  - Maximum Height: 30' flat roof, 35' varied/stepped back roofline (no bonus)
  - FAR: 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial (no bonus)
  - Lot Coverage: 90%
  - Lot Consolidation: 2 (>2 if conform to MSC)
- 
- No changes from existing residential uses, residential land use designations or residential zoning to commercial
  - Use zoning and other land use and planning tools to encourage the siting of independent retail uses and discourage national chain stores on Ocean Front Walk

# **Abbot Kinney Boulevard**

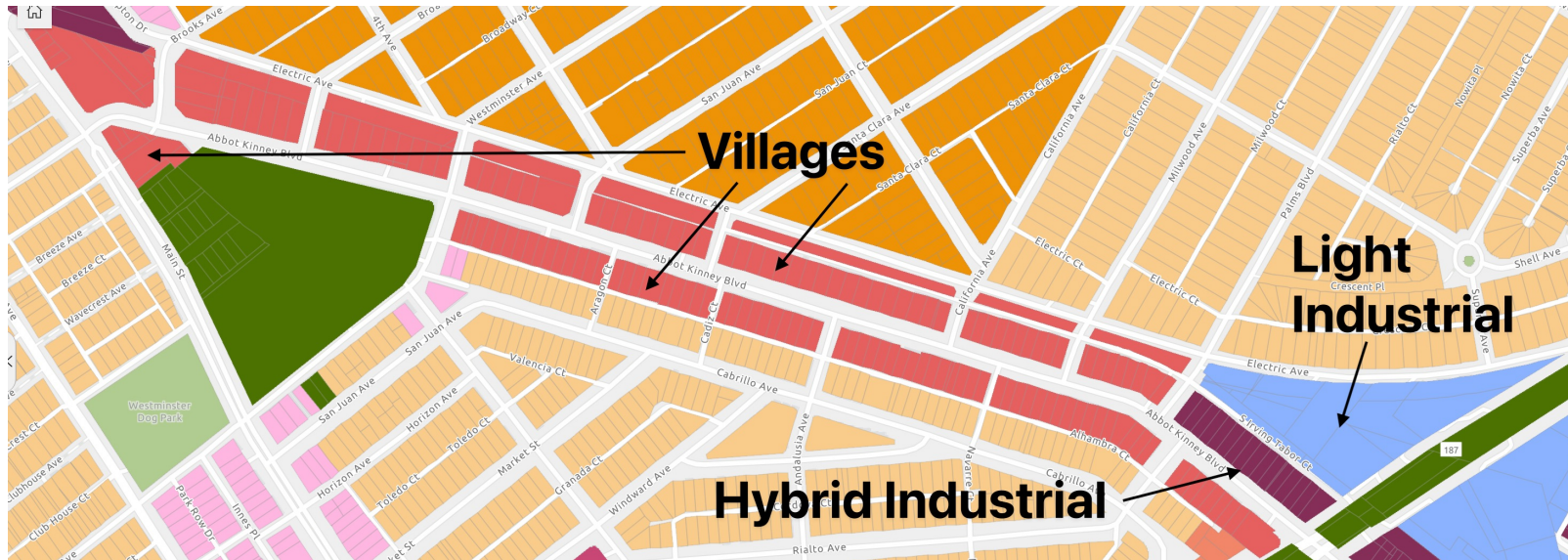
## Public Comments Summary for Abbot Kinney

- In the description of Villages (the land use designation assigned to Abbot Kinney) it says that Abbot Kinney is historic and a cultural regional niche market. My concern about a lot of this is that it's going to stop being historic if we allow new building, especially up to five stories. The thing that makes Abbot Kinney so charming is all of the original architecture that's still standing, and I think that it would be great to try and put in the plan that we'd like to retain that whenever possible, and that maybe there's a certain percentage that has to stay that way. Or we might even want to have some of these buildings get distinctions where they cannot be changed or they cannot be torn down. Otherwise, we're going to look like everybody else. Same for the Boardwalk.
- Drive down Abbot Kinney. I drove there with my husband the other night. And I said to him, five stories--that would be the top of those palm trees. Think about whether you want buildings going up to the top of the palm trees.
- I think we ought to propose, at the very minimum, a five-foot setback for any new buildings on Abbot Kinney, because we need the space on the sidewalk for moving safely and for being a nice experience for tourists and residents alike. It's just too narrow. It's lovely to have outdoor eating.

## **Protection of RSO Units and Other Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing – Abbot Kinney Blvd**

- While it is important to increase housing unit density in Los Angeles, it cannot be at the expense of naturally occurring affordable homes currently occupied by long-term community members who, if displaced for new development, are unable to relocate within their community or afford to return when the development is complete. RSO units play a crucial role in providing stability, cohesion and socioeconomic diversity for our communities as they safeguard tenants from displacement, exorbitant rent hikes and unjust evictions.
- The possibility of eliminating RSO units and other naturally occurring affordable housing due to Planning’s proposed increases in density significantly impacts the housing stability of vulnerable communities such as Venice. It also increases the potential for homelessness, especially as the relocation fees do not adequately cover ever increasing market rate rents, nor do they equitably accommodate larger households. We must not compromise the lives of our lower-income community members, many lifelong.
- The Coastal Act states in section 30116 that areas that provide existing coastal housing for low- and moderate-income persons are “Sensitive Coastal Resource areas.” The Coastal Act requires that sensitive coastal resources be protected. Those areas must be identified so that protection can be put into place. The certified Land Use Plan Policy I. E. 1. states that Venice’s unique social diversity should be protected as a Special Coastal Community pursuant to Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.
- A “community plan” must not displace community members currently living in older housing stock that is RSO or otherwise affordable or lower cost housing. USC professor Manuel Pastor, co-author of the report Rent Matters, states "Housing stability matters because it is associated with physical, social, and psychological well-being; higher educational achievement by the young; and benefits for people of color." RSO and other naturally occurring affordable housing play a crucial role in providing stability, cohesion, and socioeconomic diversity for our communities.
- The priority of the Venice Community Plan and LCP update must be the preservation and protection of existing RSO/rent-stabilized units, other naturally occurring affordable housing, and our existing unique, diverse community, which must take precedence, be the priority over, and supersede any zoning changes.

# Abbot Kinney Blvd – City Planning Proposed Land Use Designations



**Villages**

Villages are characterized by walkable and fine-grained block patterns that serve as historic and cultural regional niche market destinations. The building form is Very Low Rise, Low Rise, or Mid Rise, and typically includes a height limit for uniform building mass. Commercial uses, such as restaurants, retail, services, and small offices may be interspersed with a range of housing types; commercial uses on the ground floor help promote a pedestrian atmosphere. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings and infill development is responsive to the historic and cultural legacy of these areas. The residential density generally ranges from 1 unit per 1,200 square feet of lot area to 1 unit per 200 square feet of lot area; the residential density of Villages that are close to transportation hubs and/or Regional Centers may be limited by floor area.

**Light Industrial**

Light Industrial areas preserve and sustain industrial activity while serving as a jobs base. The building form ranges from Very Low Rise to Low Rise, and the site layout typically varies to accommodate a range of industries. Uses include manufacturing, warehouse and distribution, research and development, office, and limited commercial. Housing is generally not permitted in Light Industrial areas but limited residential uses may be allowed, for example, through adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

**Hybrid Industrial**

Hybrid Industrial areas preserve productive activity and prioritize employment uses, but may accommodate live/work uses or limited residential uses. The building form ranges from Very Low Rise to Mid Rise. Uses include light industrial, commercial, and office, with selective live/work uses. The residential density generally ranges from 1 unit per 1,500 square feet of lot area to 1 unit per 200 square feet of lot area; the residential density of Hybrid Industrial areas that are close to transportation hubs and/or Regional Centers may be limited by floor area.



Abbot Kinney Boulevard			
COMMERCIAL--City Planning Proposed Land Use Designations	Villages	Hybrid Industrial	Light Industrial
StoryMap Color			
Existing Zoning/Land Use Designation	C2-1-0-CA, C2-CA Community Commercial & Artcraft	M1-1-0 Limited Industry	M1-1-0 Limited Industry
Density - SF/LU	800 SF/LU 400-800 SF/LU 800 SF/LU	800 SF/LU No residential except in a CM use 800-1,200 SF/LU	No residential No residential No residential
Maximum Height	3 Stories (5 Stories) 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back (no bonus*)	3 Stories (5 Stories) 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back (no bonus*)	No Limit 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back 30' flat roof 35' varied/stepped back (no bonus*)
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	1.5 (3) 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial (no bonus*)	1.0 (1.5) 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial (no bonus*)	1.0 (3) 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial (no bonus*)
Lot Coverage	90%	90%	90%
Lot Consolidation	2 (>2 if conform to MSC) 2 (>2 if conform to MSC)	2 (>2 if conform to MSC) 2 (>2 if conform to MSC)	2 (>2 if conform to MSC) 2 (>2 if conform to MSC)

\* Rather than using the “by right” bonuses in the future Zoning Code (for which City Planning cannot explain the methodology), in the Coastal Zone the Density Bonus law would be used, which applies to projects with 5 or more total units and permits development “bonuses” in return for providing a specified percentage of total units as affordable housing, in a manner that is consistent with both the Density Bonus law and the Coastal Act.

March 2024 Planning Proposal    **Currently Allowed**    **Recommended (with Bonus)**

**The Venice Neighborhood Council recommends the following changes for the Abbot Kinney Blvd subarea to Planning's current proposal for the Venice Community Plan:**

**Villages**

- Maximum Height: 30' flat roof, 35' varied/stepped back roofline (no bonus)
- FAR: 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial (no bonus)
- Lot Coverage: 90%
- Lot Consolidation: 2 (>2 if conform to MSC)

**Hybrid Industrial**

- Density: 800-1,200 SF/LU
- Maximum Height: 30' flat roof, 35' varied/stepped back roofline (no bonus)
- FAR: 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial (no bonus)
- Lot Coverage: 90%
- Lot Consolidation: 2 (>2 if conform to MSC)

**Light Industrial**

- Maximum Height: 30' flat roof, 35' varied/stepped back roofline (no bonus)
- FAR: 1.0 commercial only, 1.5 residential/commercial (no bonus)
- Lot Coverage: 90%
- Lot Consolidation: 2 (>2 if conform to MSC)

- No changes from existing residential uses, residential land use designations or residential zoning to commercial
- Use zoning and other land use and planning tools to encourage the siting of independent retail uses and discourage national chain stores on Abbot Kinney Blvd

End